

ISLAND FOR ARTISTS

If you are an artist (painter, poet, novelist, sculptor, musician), talented, serious, perhaps hard beset by New York, consider an Island-- 650-acre Stoddart's Island, 275 miles due East of Boston, uninhabited for the past 30 years except by 100 sheep belonging to someone living on the mainland of Nova Scotia, which is 8 miles away across open water. There are 2 wells on the island left by earlier settlers, but no gas or electricity. On one end is a lighthouse, which belongs to the Crown, and on the other a natural, sheltered harbor and a dilapidated pier; and in between, 650 acres, 75% of which is woodland.

It is just possible that a bunch of artists could get together and buy the thing. It would not be easy, and ladies who like painting sailboats on summer afternoons should look elsewhere. There would be nothing "arty" about it, for the reason that no one less than radically dedicated would be willing to make the sacrifices required to last it out under conditions similar to those on the American frontier 150 years ago. There are a couple of houses on the island, but they're reportedly in very bad, perhaps hopeless, condition, and we would have to build more ourselves. Of course, not everybody will want to live there all year round; for the first year or so I doubt that anyone could. But if we owned the place, got it into our hands, we could do what we want, take our time. (Taxes would be no problem; last year the owner paid \$31.88, total.) It seems an incredibly fine place to do serious "woodshedding," at least during the 6 warm months of the year. Everyone will have his own dream, of course, and the island is big enough to accomodate them all; my own dream is that if we can get enough good and talented people together we could provide through our example a focus for a renaissance of the arts in this country.

What virtually cripples and may yet kill this dream is the price-tag. The man's asking price is \$1000.00 an acre (\$650,000.00) with 29% down and 20 years to pay the rest at 8% interest, bringing the total to something like a million dollars. This is of course impossible, and I have talked to him and he is willing to take \$400,000.00 if we can get it up in cash. He might also agree to a short-term mortgage (say, 5 or 6 years), if the down payment is big. But much longer than 5 years would get us into that killing interest rate again. I am open to any suggestions that anyone might have; but at the moment the best plan seems to be that 40 of us get together and each raise \$10,000.00.

That is a lot of money; though in a sense it is surprisingly little. Everything is relative (and if you have any relatives you might consider tapping them). For 10 Grand, each of us will have a minimum of 16 acres, if one wanted to look at it that way--although it might



be better if we all owned all of it; a little practical "communism" might save us a lot of hassles over Private Property. (I realize that 80 people paying \$5000.00 each would also do the trick; but that seems to me unmanageably large; the island is a finite area, as yet unspoiled, unpolluted, etc; apart from organizational problems, it would be just too many people. For \$10,000.00--or, for \$5000.00 cash and \$1000.00 per year for about 6 years--we will own this island forever, and at the same time be part of a community of people sharing similar ideals and inspirations.)

All this can be worked out. The purpose of this present sheet is to send out a feeler to determine what kind of support the project might have in the artistic community. I am sorry that money has to be such an important consideration in this business, but I don't know how to get around it. It is the first hurdle, after which all the "real" problems begin. If you have any suggestions, or (better) if you can get 5 or 10 thousand in cash and want to sign on, please write or call me as soon as possible, since I think I will have to sign an option agreement very soon.

If the response is significant, I will go out and get us a good lawyer and we can go on to the next step.

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